

**INITIATIVES FOR ANGOLAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH FUTURES:
MID-POINT REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

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Following the work of the Province-based War Trauma Training team in late 1998, Christian Children's Fund (CCF)/Angola began work on youth projects entitled Initiatives for Angolan Children and Youth Futures (IACYF). Although the initial proposal for IACYF called for long-term development work, the re-eruption of war in Angola in December, 1998 necessitated project adjustment. To meet the expanding emergency needs, the project was redesigned to include two components: long-term work in relatively stable areas and emergency assistance to displaced and orphaned children. In both, the methodology involved training and capacity-building; conduct of structured, normalizing activities; and interweaving of Western and traditional methods to achieve sustainability. The specific activities and division of labor between the two components are detailed in the Project Implementation Plan of June 25, 1999.

With IACYF now at its mid-point, this is an appropriate moment to reflect on the project, take stock of its strengths and weaknesses, identify key lessons learned, and suggest any modifications needed. At the request of Lloyd Feinberg, DCOF Director, the CCF/Angola team conducted an intensive internal reflection involving a review of current project data by the national team, discussions with the project staff at the July, 2000 quarterly meeting, and analysis by Mike Wessells, CCF psychosocial consultant who visited Luanda and Benguela August 15 -20, 2000. The figures reported in this document reflect work completed as of August 15, 2000.

This report summarizes the main results of this reflection and makes recommendations based upon it. The report consists of four main sections. Sections one and two, respectively, examine the long-term and emergency work. Because the situation in Angola has changed rapidly, these sections will describe briefly the current project status and adjustments made, but the main emphasis will be on strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations. The third section identifies key lessons learned from the entire project. Since it is necessary to adjust some of the quantitative monitoring and evaluation targets, the final section outlines proposed changes in the levels to be achieved.

I. LONG-TERM WORK

The main goal of the long-term work is to improve the psychosocial well-being of children, particularly youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years. The objectives of the project, which concentrates on Benguela, Huila, Luanda, Uige, and Moxico, are:

- (1) to reinforce key adults' (parents, teachers, and community leaders) knowledge of children's and adolescents' psychosocial needs;
- (2) to improve adolescents' social integration into the community;
- (3) to improve the social integration of children aged 6-11 years;
- (4) to improve basic care for pre-school children aged 0-5 years; and
- (5) to influence public policy regarding the impact of violence on children and adolescents.

A. Current Status

Initiation of the project was delayed due to the re-eruption of war, the need to reassign project staff from various projects, the impact of the war on the national staff, and the difficulties adjusting

the project activities to adolescents. As the first youth-focused project in Angola, IACYF had a significant amount of learning to do in regard to how to work effectively with adolescents. In many respects, the Angolan teams had to completely reorient their work from the PBWTT and develop a new methodology without the assistance of in-country models. In addition, the changing situation in Angola has rendered inappropriate some of the project targets established at the time of the initial implementation planning.

Despite these difficulties, Table 1 indicates that IACYF has made substantial progress toward meeting its mid-point objectives. Projections based on the accomplishments of the most recent quarters indicate that the project is well on its way toward achieving the planned end-point target levels, assuming that the war situation does not become worse. The most remarkable success has been the dynamism and high level of youth participation. With regard to adolescents, the project has conducted 34 trainings for 351 selected youth and has made 237 follow-up visits. These follow-up visits consist of meetings and dialogues about subjects (e.g., sexuality, AIDS, and prostitution) selected by youth groups. It has also organized 108 youth groups that have engaged 3,169 youth, nearly double the projected mid-term target. Youth have been highly active in community based initiatives, exceeding by far the mid-term target. In many communities, elders report that youth are playing key roles in the community projects and in the wider life of the community. Many youth report that as a result of the project, they have more activities, higher levels of self-esteem, improved behavior, better relations with peers and parents, and increased hope. Much larger numbers of youth than had been expected have also participated in sports and recreational activities. Overall, the picture is one of very high levels of youth engagement, a conclusion confirmed through focus group discussions involving youth and the author.

On the other hand, progress has been slow in regard to some areas of youth activity, and data regarding some project activities is incomplete. Work on microenterprise development has had to move slowly because of the severe economic difficulties, including an annual inflation rate of over 200%, and a paucity of appropriate models. School integration data are of necessity incomplete since the project had to conduct a census to determine the numbers of adolescents, and the data will soon be available.

With regard to adults, 24 trainings have been conducted for 532 key adults, representing accomplishment of 33% and 37% of the planned mid-point targets, respectively. Progress has been slower on community initiatives, which have been relatively large, labor intensive, and impacted by the very high inflation rates. IACYF has also achieved 33% and 40% of the mid-point targets for number of workshops and partnerships regarding government and civil society.

The project is also producing discernible benefits for children in the age ranges of 6-11 and 3-5 years. Although no accurate data had existed on the numbers of teachers and schools at the time the project began, IACYF has generated much enthusiasm among teachers, who feel well-supported by the training. The project has trained 172 teachers so far, and each training creates new demand, as trainees talk to other teachers, who then want to participate in training sessions. The teachers report that the trainings have helped them understand children's needs and have provided many useful ideas about how to assist children. Children have participated enthusiastically in the sports and recreational activities provided. The numbers of children, however, have been smaller than had

been anticipated initially since no accurate baseline information on numbers of children had been available. There has been a significant gender difference in regards to the manner in which youth spend their time. Whereas girls have tended to spend more time working with children, boys have tended to participate more on the community projects.

A remarkable success in the project has been the establishment of literacy groups in communities. Although they are not listed in Table 1 since they are funded fully by CCF matching funds, the literacy groups have in fact become a useful complement to the program for youth mobilization and empowerment. At present in Angola, no schools exist for illiterate adolescents, who need basic literacy and life skills to develop hope and competencies for the future. The informal literacy groups provide a means of building basic skills of literacy for youth who cannot be integrated into schools. The groups are led by reliable instructors who have been trained by the psychosocial team to use participatory methodology and activities that facilitate emotional expression and integration. Demand for the literacy groups has been increasing among adults as well as youths. Since adult modeling of participation in literacy classes can help to motivate adolescents and is valuable in itself, a decision was made to include adults as well as youth. At present, there are 836 participating students, approximately two-thirds of whom are adolescents. For both adolescents and adults, women (468) significantly outnumber the men (368). The enthusiasm of women participants must be regarded as highly positive in light of gender equity and the many benefits of women's literacy to health, reproductive decision-making, community development, and realization of human potential.

B. Strengths

Primary project strengths include the following.

1. Highly participatory, culturally grounded methodology. The project has established a highly effective, culturally appropriate mode of entering communities, establishing positive relations, and engaging in processes of dialogue and mobilization. Having met with the appropriate government officials, CCF staff enter communities by talking with *sobas*, the traditional chiefs and explaining what CCF does and how it would like to work with the community. Next, meetings are held with elders, church leaders, influential women, teachers, and other key informants in the community. Using a methodology of elicitation and participatory dialogue, CCF staff learn about local beliefs and practices. Local communities report consistently that the respect demonstrated for local culture helps to build positive relations, to increase self-esteem in a context in which colonial regimes had taught local people to feel inferior about their own culture, and to give them the confidence needed to build a positive future. CCF staff also explain CCF's orientation, discuss the needs of children, and ask who in the community is in a good position to assist children. People who are identified repeatedly and who are motivated to assist children are subsequently selected for training, and a small percentage of these trainees are selected to become Promoters. This sets the stage for planning community initiatives, which the community plans and implements in partnership with CCF.

2. Effective curriculum development and tailoring of training seminars to the local context. The team has effectively carried forward the methodology and curriculum used in the PBWTT

when possible and has also made necessary changes. The seminars continued the PBWTT training topics of healthy child development, the impact of family and community violence on children, ways to assist children including the use of local rituals, and nonviolent conflict resolution. When IACYF began amidst war, the political situation was very tense, and talking of peace and reconciliation was dangerous. Accordingly, the team avoided discussion of peace and reconciliation, which had been included in the PBWTT. These important subjects will be reintroduced as the situation improves.

Because the re-eruption of war was traumatic, the national team decided initially not to discuss the impacts of war in the training seminars since this could increase people's vulnerability and reopen large wounds. Instead, the trainers focused on resilience, the positives in life even under difficult circumstances, and the impacts of violence, including family violence over which local people have control. Although well-intentioned, this approach encountered problems that necessitated additional curriculum adjustment. In particular, trainees indicated a readiness to discuss the war and were making connections on their own between the war and the high levels of family and community violence. Recognizing the connections between the violence of war and other forms of violence, the team decided to strike a balance between talking about the war and resilience. Although peace per se is not discussed currently, war prevention remains on the agenda. By encouraging critical thinking, the trainings are essential tools for increasing community independence and reducing their susceptibility to political manipulation.

Focus group discussions with trainees indicate high levels of satisfaction with the seminars and what they have learned. Trainees particularly like the mixture of Western and traditional approaches, feel more hopeful and well supported by the partnership with CCF, and say they are now in a better position to care effectively for their children. Trainees report that as a result of the trainings, adults have better relations with their children, are less likely to use harsh corporal punishment as a means of discipline, and talk more extensively with children about issues. Many trainees said that the seminars provided the first opportunity to step back from the war, ask how they had been affected, and begin connecting past, present, and future.

3. Effective adaptation of curriculum and methodology to youth. Issues and approaches that excite youth differ from those that engage adults. Since no training curriculum existed for adolescents, a highly significant project was to develop an appropriate adolescent-focused curriculum that takes into account the distinct needs, issues, and capacities of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 years. In discussions of children's psychosocial development, the training provided increased material on adolescence, including the physical and psychological changes, sexual awakening, and factors in the family, peer group, and community that influence healthy adolescent development. Regarding violence, the training focused on physical and verbal violence; causes and manifestations of violence between adolescents and children, adolescents, and adults; reactions of individuals to violence; and nonviolent conflict resolution. In addition, youth in each province continue their learning through community dialogues and youth meetings on topics such as drug abuse, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, education and individual development, and traditions and life preparation. In essence, this approach makes learning and preparation an ongoing task that extends beyond the seminars. A key point is that the youth themselves choose the topics of these meetings and dialogues, adding to their empowerment and sense of leadership in the

project.

Since youths were relatively unfamiliar with traditional beliefs and methods, the trainers required the youth to ask their parents or community elders about traditional beliefs and practices. This process of dialogue of youth with parents and elders helped to increase social integration across generations. In addition, youths' willingness to learn about traditions has won them new respect. To date, the youth report that the trainings have increased their understanding of key issues facing adults, given them new perspective, increased their confidence and self-esteem, and helped to improve their role and status in the community.

4. Sustainable community mobilization. At the community level, mobilization occurs through the activity of CCF staff in conjunction with trained Promoters, who themselves are from the community and constitute sustainable resources. The Promoters work through local groups, help to initiate and support youth groups, increase awareness of children's needs and ways of assisting children, and encourage community mobilization around children's needs. Initially, it had been expected that the Promoters would work full time and receive a small subsidy of \$100 per month. Recognizing the need for a larger number of Promoters and the problems of creating dependency and a relatively wealthy elite within communities, a decision was made to increase the number of Promoters and to pay each a smaller subsidy of \$20 per month. Since they work for the project three days per week, they would earn their living in other ways. In fact, their motivation has been so strong that they work much more than two days per week, although they pursue parallel activities to earn a living. This willingness to volunteer labor, coupled with a low subsidy that minimizes risks of dependency, makes the Promoters sustainable resources for assisting children.

Sustainable mobilization is fostered also by working in a culturally grounded manner. Rather than create new social structures and processes that may have little basis in the local culture, the project supports and works through existing social networks and encourages leadership by different groups such as youth, elders, women, and teachers.

5. Distributed leadership. IACYF has created a distributed network and a less hierarchical system of leadership than had been present in the PBWTT. Key elements of this leadership include the motivation for growth and self-improvement and the creativity and mutual support visible at all levels of the project. Ongoing training for the provincial teams and the national team has enlarged the pool of project-relevant skills and has encouraged increased independence, creativity, and initiative. These emphases on initiative and creativity have led local teams to innovate and to share their new learning with the national team. The national team innovates and shares new ideas and tools with the provincial staff, creating a two-way exchange. The resulting distributed leadership and power-sharing helps to build capacity at multiple levels.

6. Youth activation and support. Direct participation of youth in planning and implementing activities provides an enormous source of energy for the project and helps to enable youth leadership. Youth report that before the project had begun, they had few activities, spent much time idling, had poor relations with parents and local leaders, and felt marginalized. Now that the youth have become organized into groups and engage in a wide variety of activities, youth report that they feel better supported, have more options, experience high levels of solidarity, and benefit from

participation in different activities. Youths' enthusiastic participation in community initiatives has increased their social integration, elevated their social status, and strengthened their spirit of community service. Adults and youth report that the youth have more hope, fight less often, and exhibit better values.

7. Gender sensitivity and balance. At all levels, the project is including and supporting females as well as males. In the collection of focus group data, separate discussions are conducted for women and men, and the gender of the facilitator matches that of the participants. Both men and women serve as Promoters, and approximately equal numbers of men and women participate in the trainings for adults. Among youth, both girls and boys participate in equal numbers in activities, and they participate together in activities such as peer support dialogues and drama performances that educate youth and the communities. Youth report that before the project, boys and girls had seldom participated in joint activities and they now feel better integrated.

8. Integrated programming. A key lesson of the PBWTT was the importance of integrating psychosocial programming and material assistance in ways that contribute to healthy psychosocial development. IACYF embodies this lesson, as the community initiatives provide material development, help to meet basic needs, and show tangible improvement in very difficult circumstances. Through youth participation and community planning, these initiatives enable social integration, solidarity, positive values, and hope.

Effective integration has also been achieved in the two neighborhoods in which the IACYF and Child Survival programs overlap. Staff of both projects are recognized as CCF staff rather than of staff of unrelated projects, and they exchange information and ideas in a mutually supportive manner. In addition, complementary impacts are clearly visible. For example, single, teenage mothers who participate in both projects report significant stress reduction through the Child Survival coverage of the medication and health care costs for their infants. Similarly, the Child Survival project requires effective transmission of basic health messages. Working through their networks and communication venues such as community billboards, youth are aiding this effort. Further, youth groups established by IACYF have elected to use methods such as drama to educate community people on issues such as prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Thus both projects benefit from youth mobilization.

A third level of integration entails integration of project work with wider efforts toward peace. In Angola, ethnic and inter-community conflict are major sources of tension and poor social integration. Recognizing this, the training seminars include material on nonviolent conflict resolution. As described in the IACYF Quarterly Report from August, 7, 2000, the project has taken steps to build improved relations between communities. In Cambila, Uige, neighboring but segregated communities experienced significant tensions, which could have been played out in the project. Instead, the team astutely used the project activity as a means of enabling cooperation and better relations. By planning a joint playground built mid-way between the neighborhoods, bringing the neighborhood leaders together for dialogue, and enabling the conduct of reconciliation rituals involving the elders on both sides, the project significantly improved inter-community relations.

9. Credibility of CCF. CCF has become a braintrust of psychosocial expertise in Angola. It is frequently asked to provide trainings for different groups, and the Angolan Government often asks groups that want to conduct psychosocial work to talk first with CCF. In addition, CCF staff are invited frequently to participate in and contribute to workshops and public events bearing on children's well-being. This credibility and public visibility help to keep children's issues on the agenda, increase the willingness of many communities to partner with CCF, and help to enable collaboration with governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations.

10. Effective use of qualitative data and participatory evaluation methods. A key lesson from the PBWTT had been to use fewer evaluation scales and to emphasize the collection of useful qualitative data that may guide program improvements in a timely manner. IACYF makes extensive use of focus group data because the data reveal youths' views about the program, their hopes and frustrations, their sense of how they and their relations with others are changing, and so on. The data are not only rich but also immediately applicable, as suggestions that come out of a discussion can lead to a new youth group activity in the following weeks. Equally important, this participatory approach gives youth a voice, which helps to overcome their previous feelings of invisibility and not being listened to.

A particularly valuable approach has been to conduct focus groups by age groups, thereby contrasting the perspectives of different groups. For example, when the teams asked groups of adults how children who misbehave are disciplined, adults emphasized talking about the problem, withholding food, or, if the situation were severe, taking youth to the police. In contrast, youths emphasized that discipline by adults typically involves beating, head-banging, whipping with a belt, or ear-pulling. If youth and adults offer conflicting perspectives or information, this may be used as an occasion for new learning through follow-up dialogues between youth and adults.

C. Weaknesses and Recommendations

The project's strengths vastly outweigh its weaknesses. However, the weaknesses provide important opportunities for learning from the failures and difficulties of adjustment that accompany any new large-scale project. The weaknesses, outlined together with recommendations, are presented in the spirit of enabling significant improvements in the project.

1. Lack of adequate crisis intervention and support for the helpers. Crises impose tremendous stresses on the staff and necessitate support for the helpers. When the war re-erupted in December, 1998, members of the CCF national team were powerfully affected by the war, which seemed to destroy much of what they had accomplished. The re-eruption of war shattered hope, increased economic stresses, and produced powerful fear and concern over family and friends. While the war reawakened traumatic memories from previous stages of fighting, the team had to make decisive actions to save lives by, for example, evacuating staff from very dangerous areas. As a result, the national staff felt quite overwhelmed.

In adapting to the crisis, the national team exercised good judgment and functioned with enormous care and efficiency. Looking back, however, they realize that they had been strongly affected in ways they could not articulate at the time, and they now appreciate their need for more

outside support. Potentially, the needed outside support could have come through resources such as ILAS, the Chilean group that has provided much psychosocial support and stress management for the national team, and the CCF Technical Assistance Group. However, these groups typically assist at the invitation of the Angolan national team, which in this case was unable to self-assess accurately. Accordingly, additional outside perspective should be available to help trigger assistance when it is needed.

Recommendations: Invite ILAS to conduct a visit shortly following the crisis eruption. Include on the national team one person from outside the country whose job is partly to monitor the situation and the needs of the team, to recommend outside support and assistance when it seems necessary, and to provide outside perspective on proposals for program modification.

2. Excessive workload. A strength of the project is that it works with multiple age groups. Yet addressing the needs of large numbers of children and tailoring activities to different groups imposes a very heavy burden of work. Excessive workload also stems from the tendency to conduct large numbers of focus groups in a community as part of the monitoring and evaluation system. In some communities, as many as 24 focus groups have been conducted. This is not strictly an evaluation issue, as the team wants to continue so many groups in part because of their mobilizing effect.

Recommendations: Reduce the number of communities the project works in simultaneously by staggering the initiation of project work across communities. Reduce the number of focus groups to be conducted in new project areas.

3. Perceived subsidy inconsistencies. In two neighborhoods, IACYF is being implemented simultaneously with complementary Child Survival work funded by USAID, creating a holistic approach. For IACYF, subsidized Promoters at the community level are the primary implementers of the project. At present, the Promoters see themselves as working at least as many hours and as hard as the community staff for the Child Survival project but as receiving significantly lower subsidies. Although the Promoters have been willing to donate much volunteer work, invidious comparisons are beginning to undermine morale.

In fact, a strong rationale exists for the subsidy differences. The Child Survival workers—family health agents, community social workers, and Ministry of Health nurses—have higher levels of education and technical qualifications. In addition, the Family Health Agents each have responsibility for a large number of families. These agents must make eight home visits daily, and if they cannot locate a particular family, they have to put in hours on the weekends. In view of the different levels of training, responsibility, and required workload, the subsidy differentials are justifiable. The problem, however, is that local Promoters do not understand this rationale, and this contributes to invidious comparisons.

Recommendation: In the overlap neighborhoods, the respective program managers should articulate clearly for all CCF workers the rationale for the subsidy differences and work to correct perceptions of unfairness.

4. Unrealistic targets. Since no comprehensive baseline survey was conducted as part of the preparation of the detailed implementation plan, some of the targets established for the project have no basis in reality. For example, targets had been set regarding numbers of students to return to school, but in fact these were not based on accurate estimates of numbers of children, numbers of schools, and related items. Unfortunately, significant stress on local staff results from the establishment of targets that turn out to be far above what is feasible or appropriate in the local situation. Indeed, highly motivated staff may tend to see the failure to achieve the stated targets as a failure on their part that carries risks such as job losses or reductions in project funding. To address these problems, it is vital to conduct a baseline survey at the start of the project and to educate staff about the reasons for and implications of failures to meet particular targets.

Recommendations: Adjust particular project targets (see section IV below). Conduct a comprehensive baseline survey as part of the detailed implementation plan at the start of each project.

5. Inadequate documentation. As had occurred in the PBWTT, the project has not been documented adequately. For example, very creative and appropriate adjustments to curriculum and pedagogy were made but have not been documented carefully, making it difficult for others to learn from what had been developed. Part of the problem is the need for translators on site. A related difficulty is the press of time and the need for someone whose designated task is to document the project process, methodology, and training, in addition to evaluation. Although technically beyond the scope of IACYF, it would be valuable to document and evaluate interactions and complementarities between the IACYF and Child Survival projects.

Recommendations: Hire on-site translators. Appoint or hire a documentation officer.

6. Delays in program implementation. The re-eruption of war in December, 1998 caused delays in project implementation. In addition, the initiation of work on microeconomic development has been delayed due to problems of very high inflation and the need to learn more about local, situationally appropriate implementation strategies. Initially, the plan had been to arrange micro-credit through solidarity groups, but focus group data indicate that the levels of distrust and suspicion may make this less feasible than an approach based on individual loans. Although some youth are involved already in small business activity on their own, few project models are available to draw on.

Recommendations: Conduct pilot projects on microeconomic development, trying out different approaches and testing which work best in the local context.

II. Assistance to Displaced and Orphaned Children

The current phase of the war has produced large waves of internally displaced people (IDPs), many of whom live in camps under very difficult conditions. Relatively few services are available for assisting children in these camps as well as in the orphanages and temporary care facilities established to protect children.

The primary goal of this part of the project is to increase the well-being of displaced children and orphans in Angola. The specific objectives are:

- (1) to increase the level of knowledge related to the psychosocial needs of orphan and displaced children;
- (2) to teach the importance of treating displaced people with dignity and respect;
- (3) to contributed to the normalization of life for displaced children;
- (4) to increase the level of understanding of the psychosocial needs of children in orphanages and reception centers.

B. Current Status

In accord with the implementation plan, a mobile team consisting of two trainers has worked in various provinces, allocating time in proportion to the numbers of IDPs in various provinces. As a result, the team has concentrated mostly on Luanda, Bie, Huambo, and Moxico since those are the areas having the greatest numbers of displaced people. The focus has been on IDP camps located in provincial capitals that are relatively safe.

As indicated in Table 2, this part of the project has already exceeded most of the final targets established. For example, the numbers of training sessions, trainees, and follow-up meetings is two to three times what had been expected. This situation reflects the success and value of the trainings, which has stimulated demand among NGOs, government personnel, churches, and volunteers. Even more striking is the gap between expectations and mid-term accomplishments with regard to numbers of displaced children who benefit from the educational, sporting, and recreational activities for children. Thus far, over seventeen thousand children have participated in the activities. Adults report that before these activities, children had nothing to do. Now, soccer games provide focal points for community activation, drawing crowds of hundreds of cheering people. Significant successes have also been achieved in regard to training of reception center and orphanage personnel, whose enthusiasm for the training necessitated increasing the size of the training groups. Four training sessions have been conducted for 94 staff thus far.

Literacy groups are being conducted in the IDP camps as they have been in the long term work. To date, a total of 139 people, 86 of whom are female, have participated. The students have commented that they enjoy their learning and their participation makes them feel more hopeful toward the future.

C. Strengths

1. Training team quality and mobility. The mobile training team was selected to include two particularly dynamic, creative trainers who could work effectively with government personnel, NGOs, churches, and volunteers on behalf of children. Since both trainers are from Bie and experienced war's impact directly, they understand what local people are going through and how displaced people feel and are treated by local authorities, NGOs, and other groups offering assistance. As a result, this team has been very well positioned to work effectively in some of the worst areas. The team's mobility was crucial at the time near the re-eruption of war since it was too unsafe at that time to have set up regular program offices. Even after the areas had become safe,

however, the mobile team approach proved to be a useful means of boosting impact. Using local networks through CCF and other agencies, it has been possible to provide assistance through training of local people in a training-of-trainers methodology that builds local capacities and enlarges coverage.

2. Participatory, integrative approach. People in IDP camps are often regarded as victims who have great need but who are too overwhelmed or live under such difficult circumstances that they cannot participate effectively in program design, implementation, and evaluation. This approach disempowers local people and fails to enable them to reassert control at a moment when the reassertion of control even in small ways contributes to well-being. In addition, war-affected displaced people have significant resilience and capacity to work on behalf of children. By training the local government, NGO, church, and reception center personnel, the mobile team helps to build local capacities for assisting displaced children and orphans. The trainees report that as a result of the training, they understand better the human dimensions of their work, how to treat people with respect, and how to engage their participation. They also report that following the training they integrate what they have learned into how they conduct their work, by, for example, generating increased participation. The displaced people themselves report feeling greater dignity, self-esteem, and well-being.

3. Adaptation of curriculum and pedagogy. Since the mobile team focuses on displaced children and orphans, it has adjusted the training curriculum to include discussion of psychosocial impacts of displacement and orphaning. In addition, since the conditions in many IDP camps are bleak and few activities exist for children, the team has encouraged reflection on how the camps and reception centers may subtly disempower children and adults and on what can be done to improve the environment and approach of the government, NGOs, and local actors.

4. Focus on community activities. Initially, the mobile team had planned to help arrange activities for children, with a focus on assisting children. However, it became clear that life in the camps was debilitating adults due to disempowerment, hopelessness, and apathy. Accordingly, the team wisely decided to emphasize activities for children that engage the entire community, help to mobilize adults, and integrate young people and adults. The mobile team takes a participatory approach that, like the long-term work, respects local people and culture, builds relations with local leaders, identifies local people (including youth) who are in a position to assist children, and empowers them through training and development of skills and positive social role. The mobilization of people around children's needs generates awareness and activities that improve child protection, care, and support.

D. Weaknesses and Recommendations

By far the biggest difficulty encountered in this part of the project is the continuation of war, which creates new waves of displaced people. Unfortunately, the project has little control over this political problem.

1. Inability to keep up with demand. Although the mobile team has worked in a highly

dedicated, flexible manner, the demand for their training and support has significantly exceeded their capacity. The increased numbers of IDPs, coupled with the success of trainings, has made it impossible for them to keep up. There is need of flexibility and funding that would make it possible to expand the assistance to the scale needed.

Recommendations: Apply for additional funding to hire more trainers and expand the work or find and train other partners who can help conduct the work.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

Stepping back from the strengths and weaknesses of particular project elements, one may discern broad lessons having implications for psychosocial and humanitarian work throughout Angola and in other war-torn regions as well.

1. Effective contingency planning and intermixing of long-term and emergency work is enabling the project to adapt to changing conditions and needs. In war zones, flexibility is an essential ingredient of program success. If IACYF had stuck to its original plans for long-term development work, which is essential for war prevention, its impact would have been reduced and its fit with the changing Angolan environment would have been questionable. To its credit, the Angolan team constructed an effective contingency plan that provided a realistic division of labor between longer-term and emergency work. This exemplar of how to effectively intermix relief and development is particularly valuable in the context of Angola since a relief focus fails to address the longer-term needs that are vital for peace while a strict development focus fails to provide assistance to the displaced people having the greatest needs. In addition, the psychosocial benefits of the planning and adjustment process should not be overlooked. In the absence of a coherent plan, however, discontinuities can arise, and uncertainties about program direction can generate unnecessary stress. Further, the failure to address emergent needs would generate emotional distress among the Angolan staff and impair their capacity to work.

2. Donor support is a necessary element for program flexibility. The flexibility of IACYF stemmed in no small part from the support and flexibility of the donors. Often staff are reluctant to change the program due to fear that they will lose their jobs or that donors will be disappointed and will withdraw further support if the initial targets are not achieved. In this case, however, the strong support of and positive relationship with DCOF gave the Angolan team the necessary strength to reorient the program in ways that fit the current situation and maximize program impact. In many respects, IACYF is a model of effective contingency planning and flexibility both at the program level and between program implementers and donors.

3. In Angola, continuous monitoring of the situation of IDPs and associated rapid response mechanisms are needed. IACYF succeeded in developing an effective contingency plan in part because it had monitored the rapidly changing situation of IDPs, who face many of the greatest risks and most severe challenges. Unfortunately, the team has visited camps and communities where people live in intolerable conditions with little food, health care, or hope. This situation likely has diverse origins, and one is hard pressed to understand why it occurs in relatively secure

contexts such as those close to Luanda. To meet the enormity of the needs in a highly fluid situation, it is vital that there be increased collaboration among NGOs, donors, and all agencies in identifying and responding rapidly to the needs of displaced people.

4. In situations of continued danger, the mobile team strategy is a viable approach to child protection and provision of assistance to war-affected children and families. In many IDP groups, virtually no activities for children had been available prior to the entry of IACYF. The structured activities developed by the mobile team have aided child protection, helped adults become more attentive to the needs of children, and mobilized communities around children's needs. In addition, the mobile team has provided a life raft and has reduced feelings of abandonment by people who live in IDP camps and communities strongly affected by war. Its mobility has enabled outreach to large numbers of people, and its support for group activities has contributed to social integration under very difficult conditions.

5. Given appropriate support, youth are valuable program resources and agents of positive community change. In most programs, adolescents are either invisible or are regarded as beneficiaries. In fact, adolescents are increasingly influential actors who are at key choice points, have great capacity to do good or harm, and need assistance to create and follow positive developmental pathways. In IACYF, the beneficial impacts on youth have been readily apparent and were expected. What were less expected were the powerful contributions of youth to community development. In a relatively short period of time and with relatively little cost and training support, youth moved into positions as community animators who play lead roles in mobilizing everyone around the needs of children. This heightened visibility and role of increased responsibility contributes significantly to positive youth identity, esteem, and place in the community.

As indicated in the recent publication *Untapped Potential* by the Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children, youth constitute a vast resource for assistance in relief and development work, and their potential has scarcely been discerned, much less mined. In many complex emergencies, youth stand to make enormous contributions to community development and to experience benefits in individual development in the process. For nations such as Angola, where youth often become part of the engine of war, this lesson urges everyone to consider a different mode of programming in which youth participation and leadership assume a central position. In many respects, IACYF embodies this spirit of youth participation and leadership.

6. Development and support of the Angolan team is vital for local leadership, capacity building, and sustainability. One feature that sets IACYF apart from many programs supported by international NGOs is the nearly exclusive reliance on Angolan staff and their leadership. This approach, which is not universally recognized, builds local capacities, enables power-sharing between local and international partners, and aids the construction of culturally grounded approaches. The benefits in generating sustainability were readily apparent when the war re-erupted in December, 1998, when many NGOs left the country. Staffed and led by Angolans, IACYF was able to continue and provided much needed support to communities in a situation of urgent need. In essence, this emergency response by the CCF team built emergency response capacity and embodied the process of local people taking charge of their own circumstances,

without excessive reliance on outside assistance.

When the war re-erupted, a key feature of staff support was the evacuation of national staff when security risks rose too high. Common practice in war zones is to evacuate ex-patriate but not national staff, and this sets an unfortunate double-standard that may be perceived as attaching less value to the lives of local people. When CCF evacuated its national staff from cities such as Kuito, it had a highly positive effect on staff morale and sense of their own worth. The net result has been to strengthen staff commitment, self-esteem, and sense of the dignity of their own lives. This latter item is particularly important since respect for the dignity of life is often one of the main casualties of war.

To support properly the Angolan team and to enable continued leadership development, however, it is vital to provide timely help for the helpers. All emergencies take an enormous emotional toll on staff, who in the heat of the situation may not be in the best position to see how they have been affected. Outside assistance is useful in triggering efforts to help the helpers, and stress management needs to be an ongoing part of the project work.

7. Training and engagement on behalf of children are themselves part of the healing process for staff. The national team was itself strongly affected by the re-eruption of war. A key part of healing and emotional support in such difficult conditions is to have staff stay involved in training when it is possible and appropriate. The Angolan team reported that by reengaging in their customary training activities, they regained a sense of normalcy of life and of continuity with the past. Since they had a positive role, they gained hope for the future. Further, they reported that they benefitted from solidarity with their fellow Angolans. This is not to imply that staff should be coerced into resumption of normal activities before they are ready or that staff should be encouraged to act as “superhumans” who do not take time to grieve. Still, the value of appropriately timed reengagement should not be underestimated.

8. In situations of acute crisis, it is vital to provide psychosocial support and to engage local participation and cultural practices. In the heat of an emergency, where the emphasis is on saving lives, well intentioned agencies may focus on the provision of material aid to meet basic needs without giving adequate attention to the human dimensions of aid. If local people are treated like cattle and robbed of their human dignity, this decreases their sense of well-being. As a result of this project, psychosocial dimensions have been integrated into the work of NGOs, government agencies, and local churches. This approach not only enlarged the scope of the project impact but also enabled agencies to provide material aid in ways that build participation, dignity, and partnership.

At every stage in this project, efforts have been made to engage local people as partners, to promote social mobilization, and to enable culturally relevant approaches. The structured activities for children in the IDP camps have helped to mobilize group activities and to rebuild the torn social fabric. The emphasis on culturally relevant forms of play and activity is crucial since restoration of a sense of cultural dignity helps to provide support and a sense of continuity under difficult conditions.

9. To assist displaced people, issues of stigmatization and social isolation need to be addressed. Although IDPs face very difficult conditions of living in camps or makeshift communities, a key part of their distress comes from their stigmatization and lack of integration with the surrounding, more permanent communities. In Angola, where long-term displacement is quite common, even people who have lived in an area for 15 years may be regarded with disdain by people who had lived in the same area their entire lives. The resulting frictions generate conflict, stimulate aggressive denial of scarce resources to IDP groups, and contribute to the climate of intolerance that helps to support a system of violence. A very useful step in this project was the linkage of intra-community healing and support activities with inter-communal efforts toward building tolerance, cooperation, and nonviolent conflict resolution. This lesson has broad application to other contexts.

10. To increase sustainability and program impact, it is useful to have trained program staff living in communities. When programs are implemented mainly by staff who visit communities occasionally, there is a risk of a gap between what happens when the staff are present and when they are absent. By training Promoters who live in local communities, IACYF is building capacity at the grassroots level and enables continuous support for advancing child development and protection. Since the Promoters are from the local communities, they understand well how to integrate the program work into the culture, rhythms, networks, and life of the community. In addition, they are positioned to say how the program must be tailored to fit the local context. Unlike center-based approaches or those which rely extensively on trainers from outside the community, IACYF leaves in place people who will continue to work on behalf of children's well-being.

11. Playgrounds have served as effective tools for community mobilization and social integration. In many communities, there were no organized activities or places where children could play before IACYF began. The construction of simple, inexpensive playgrounds having activities for different age groups provided spaces where large numbers of children gathered and played. Often the adults were keenly interested and eager to play with items such as swings that they had not had access to as children. Since trained staff and Promoters look over the activities, the spaces are child-friendly, safe, and supportive of social integration and healthy development.

The process of constructing the playgrounds is perhaps as important as the playgrounds themselves. Most communities had relatively weak planning processes before the project began, and IACYF wanted to strengthen collective planning and collaborative implementation as part of its mobilization approach. Accordingly, IACYF adopted the strategy of enabling communities to first construct a jango or community hut since this is crucial for community meetings, identity, and planning. As had occurred in the PBWTT, communities supplied the labor and CCF supplied the materials. Next, IACYF encouraged communities to build playgrounds as a means of improving children's protection and well being. The process of designing and building the playgrounds contributed significantly to group solidarity and a sense that the community could make decisions and take actions that built improvement and hope. This process linked children and adults, stimulated planning and collaboration, enabled dialogue and tolerance between different subgroups, and gave communities the "can-do" attitude needed to take control of their daily circumstances. This helped to provide a platform for more systematic planning of larger projects

such as digging a community well.

12. Holistic, integrated programming achieves the greatest impact. Although no intensive evaluation has been conducted, the preliminary evidence suggests that joint IACYF/Child Survival programming boosted the impact of IACYF at the community level. This is unsurprising since overlap communities are being mobilized by two projects rather than one. More important, the joint projects likely do a better job of meeting needs in a comprehensive manner. Since health and psychosocial well-being are inextricably interconnected, it makes sense that they would have complementary, mutually amplifying effects. This should be explored further, and if it is correct, the principle should be applied by agencies in many different regions.

13. Program planning and start-up should include a baseline survey conducted as part of a detailed implementation plan. IACYF began under rapidly changing conditions in which there was a paucity of accurate data concerning, for example, the numbers of children in schools. Wanting to go ahead and begin the program work, the staff in some cases pulled numbers out of the air rather than conducting an initial survey in defining their mid-term and end-point targets. Whatever benefits this strategy had in enabling rapid start-up were offset by the stresses staff felt over not being able to meet excessive targets or not even knowing what realistic targets consisted of. The stress and confusion made it difficult to plan program work, and it was necessary to go back and conduct a baseline survey after the fact. The hard lesson here is that a relatively systematic baseline survey should be conducted before the project work begins and the targets are defined. As detailed below, there is substantial need of adjusting some of the initially defined targets.

IV. Proposed Adjustments in Quantitative Targets

The proposed adjustments in the quantitative targets for IACYF at its end point are guided by project learning and by three particular concerns: quality, focus, and workload. IACYF is breaking new ground and is the first large-scale project in Angola that centers around adolescents. Since the project impacts large numbers of people and will likely be looked to as a model of how to assist adolescents, it is vital to insure appropriate quality. Particularly for sectors such as microeconomic development, where the situation is difficult and there are no models to go on, it is vital to avoid rushing and setting up approaches that will not work and that contribute to people's feelings of hopelessness. In addition, the project has learned that with so many activities going on, it is possible to lose the primary focus, which is on adolescents. Appropriately, the team has decided it is best to make modest decreases in the adult-related targets in order to maintain the adolescent-related targets.

With respect to workload, the project staff have been highly motivated and perhaps too ambitious. The proposed adjustments outlined below would keep the workload manageable while insuring that the training and other inputs provided are sufficient to achieve high levels of project quality and impact. In numerous cases, the target figures proposed are increases over initial projections owing to field experience regarding what is possible in the Angolan context.

A. Long-term Work

The proposed final targets are shown in the last column in Table 1. Below, the suggested changes and the rationale for making them are identified, and the numbers correspond to the rows in Table 1.

1. Decrease the number of trainings for adults from 144 to 92. This is consistent with the focus on adolescents and will still provide the “saturation” of trained adults that is needed for the success of the project. It is also congruent with project learning that adolescents, when properly supported, become the key agents of community mobilization.

2. Decrease the number of adult trainees from 2880 to 2300. This follows from the reduction in the number of trainings.

10. Decrease the number of adolescents in professional training from 3,500 to 265. This large change reflects the excessively ambitious nature of the initially proposed figure as well as the economic difficulties in the country.

11. Decrease the number of income generation activities from 1,200 to 110. This reduction is appropriate in light of the high inflation rate, the need to go slow and conduct pilot studies, and the lack of viable models from Angola.

12. Elimination of income generation targets. It is uncertain whether it will be possible or appropriate to conduct group income-generation projects. It seems wisest to wait until the pilot study data are in and the approaches better defined before suggesting any figures.

15. Change the target from an absolute value to a percentage. The staff has observed that when activities are provided for children, large numbers participate. It is cumbersome and relatively unproductive, however, to try to count each child. In addition, there is uncertainty about the appropriate counting rules. Since the object is to engage children in structured, normalizing activities and to enable social integration, it seemed fruitless to try to count closely. The local staff report that they find it easier to estimate the percentage of children in a community who participate.

17. Increase the percentage of teachers trained from 60% to 100%. This increase is consistent with the strong interest shown by local teachers, and their numbers are not so great as to overburden the training system. Staff report that training teachers is an excellent way of having an impact on large numbers of children. If all teachers receive training, they will be in a better position to support each other on the use of what they have learned and to change the culture of their schools.

18. Change the target from an absolute value to a percentage. The rationale follows that presented in regard to item 15 above.

B. Assistance to Internally Displaced Children and Orphans

Table 2 summarizes the proposed changes, most of which are increases and which have been discussed previously. The following is an itemized list.

1. Increase the number of training sessions for government personnel, NGOs, churches, and volunteer adults from 12 to 28. This recognizes the powerful demand for the training and also the strong impact being achieved. The mobile team reports that the proposed increases are feasible and could be achieved by continuing the current intensity of work.
2. Increase the number of trainees from 240 to 700. This increase is a consequence of increasing the number of trainings. It fits with what the staff has learned about maximizing impact by training organizations and people who already work with children.
3. Increase the number of follow-up visits from 24 to 80. This increase is a consequence of increasing the numbers of trainings and trainees.
4. Increase the number of displaced children engaged in educational, sporting and recreational activities from 5,250 to 17,263. This increase reflects the enormous enthusiasm and large numbers already achieved.
5. Decrease from ten to five the number of training sessions for Reception Center and Orphanage personnel. IACYF staff report that there are fewer institutional staff than had been anticipated and all of the institutions have been covered by the trainings.
6. Increase the number of trainees from 120 to 134. As noted above, this number can be achieved through a modest increase in the size of the training seminar.

These changes should contribute to the quality and impact of IACYF and to the well-being of Angolan children and families.

Conclusion

The mid-term reflection has been a highly constructive process in several respects. First, it created a space in which the Angola team could step back, take stock of what it had accomplished and learned, and plan adjustments accordingly. It occasioned much new learning, as the team was able to fully appreciate how strongly it had been affected by the re-eruption of the war. Second, it helped to document the successes and challenges of a youth-focused program that serves as a model to be applied worldwide. Third, the reflection stimulated high degrees of participation that enabled teamwork and integration between the insights of national, provincial, and local staffs. Fourth, by identifying strengths and weaknesses, it helped the team analyze specific changes and program improvements that are needed. Fifth, it yielded a number of significant lessons that ought to inform future efforts of USAID and other agencies in Angola. It is submitted with the intent of supporting comprehensive planning and programming that improves the well-being of Angolan children and families.

In Angola, this project is unique in its focus on youth as agents of community mobilization, and the project has developed mature methodologies for working effectively with youth, families, and communities in both long-term and emergency contexts. Unfortunately, the needs for assistance in

Angola are not diminishing, and they extend beyond the initially proposed period of funding. The hard question to be asked now is whether youth will have positive options for development and hope for the future. Recognizing the delays caused by the reeruption of war, the need to extend this work, and the value added by supporting and extending the approach already developed, it is respectfully suggested that DCOF consider extending the project. To follow up on this recommendation, CCF/Angola will submit a proposal for extension.

TABLE 1 – QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS FOR IACYF MID-TERM AND END POINT

GROUP	INDICATORS	MIDTERM TOTAL	MIDTERM ACHIEVED	END-POINT TOTAL	EN RE
KEY ADULTS	1- Numbers of trainings 2- Number of trainees 3- Number of community initiatives	72 1440 70	24 532	144 2880 140	
ADOLESCENTS	4- Number of trainings 5- Number of trainees 6- Number of follow ups 7- Number of organized groups 8- Number of adolescents involved 9- Percentage of adolescents integrated into the school system 10- Number of adolescents in professional training - Percentage completing professional training - Percentage working 11- Number of income generation activities 12- Number of income generation projects 13- Number of adolescents in community based initiatives 14- Number of adolescents working with children	34 900 172 172 1750 12.50% 1750 30% 20% 600 18 600 500	16 351 237 108 3169 805 125 1226 394	67 1000 1800 344 3500 25% 3500 60% 40% 1200 36 1200 1000	
CHILDREN 6-11	15- Number of children participating in sports and recreational activities 16- Number of children integrated into the formal school system 17- Number of teachers trained	54,000 25% 30%	12,710 44 172	108,000 50% 60%	
CHILDREN 3-5	18- Number of children involved in structured activities	18,000	7,098	36,000	
GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY	19- Number of workshops 20- Number of partnerships	15 15	5 6	30 30	

TABLE 2–ASSISTANCE TO DISPLACED CHILDREN AND ORPHANS,
IACYF MID-TERM & END POINT

Specific Objectives	Intervention Foci	Activities	Indicators and Targets		
			Midterm Total	Midterm Achieved N°	%
Increased level of knowledge related to the psycho-social needs of orphan & displaced children Teach importance of treating displaced people with dignity and respect	Government personnel NGOs Churches Volunteer adults	Number of training sessions	6	14	233.3
		Number of trainees	120	308	256.6
		Number of follow-up visits	12	37	308.3
Contribute to the normalization of life for the displaced children	Displaced children	Assist in setting up educational, sporting and recreational activities	2,625	17,263	657.6
Increased level of understanding of the psycho-social needs of children in orphanages and reception centers	Reception center and Orphanage personnel	Number of training sessions	5	4	80
		Number of trainees	60	94	156.6
		Number of follow-up visits	8	3	37.5